
Title: Wild Girl of the forest

Author: Horace, trader

This is a first and complete edition of a book that is widely read in its abridged form.

Her name was Leyla, she said, and her hair was braided wild with creepers and thorns. I marveled that they did not hurt her, but when I asked, she but shrugged and let her eyes roam once more across the woods. Though I had my hands securely fastened by her ropes, I itched to reach out and comb that unruly golden mane, dirtied and leaf-ridden. Her provenance, she told me over nights illuminated by campfires, was once the city of Trinsic. She claimed to have been kidnapped and raised by orcs, which I judged an unlikely tale, for all know orcs delight in eating the meat of honest folk. When I told her this, she laughed a fey laugh, and gaily admitted that honest she was not, for oft had she stolen folk away from caravans to loot their possessions from an unconscious body! At this, I began to fear for my life, and her smile seemed full of teeth sharper than a human ought to have, for the tale of orcish raising had struck fear into the marrow of my bones. "Will thou eat me?" I

asked, a-tremble, fearing
the answer.

And she cocked her
head at me, like a wild
animal facing a word that
it dost not understand,
and the fixity in her
eyes was a glimpse into
the deeper reaches of
the Abyss. But she finally
grunted, and said "Nay," in
a voice that recalled to
me a child. "Nay," she
said, "for thou dost
remind me of a boy I
knew once, when I was a
girl who played in a city
of great sandstone walls,
before I was taken. He
had sandy hair like thee,
and I dreamt as a child
of holding his hand and
sharing flavored ice. His
name was Japheth.

The next morning
she let me go, stripped
of my pouch and clothes,
and bade me run through
the woods, and to fear
recapture, for surely her
heart would not soften
again. 'Twas a fearful
run, and I came to the
road to Yew with welts
and scratches run
rampant crost my skin,
but I did not see her
again.

Oft have I wondered
of the boy named
Japheth, and whether he
remembers a girl who
lived in sandstone walls.
The only Japheth I know
is the Guildmaster of
Paladins who died last
year warring amidst the
orcs, and though he had
indeed sandy hair, I
cannot picture him side
by side with a feral girl
whose tongue has tasted
of human flesh. Yet the
paths of fate are
strange indeed, and I
suppose 'tis possible that

this paladin died defending
his remembered lady's
honor, unknowingly struck
down by the orc that she
called father.

I once happened upon the
old widow of Japheth,
long ago in Trinsic. They
had raised a baby
together but he had
passed before the girl
was five. The daughters
name too, was Leyla.
When I inquired I was
told she was named at
Japheth's insistence and
that he would accept no
other name for his
daughter.

The widow told me of
Japheth's final mission,
retrieving a cache of
rare books for the
nobility of the land. While
the books were discovered
and distributed amongst
the nobles, the pension
this old widow had been
paid was quite lacking.

As I looked into this
younger Leyla's eyes I
could see that same wild
fire as her namesake. It
again chilled my spine and
I took my leave of this
embittered broken family.